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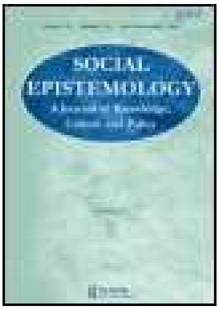

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Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression

Kristie Dotson

Epistemic oppression refers to persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production. The tendency to shy away from using the term "epistemic oppression" may follow from an assumption that epistemic forms of oppression are generally reducible to social and political forms of oppression. While I agree that many exclusions that compromise one's ability to contribute to the production of knowledge can be reducible to social and political forms of oppression, there still exists distinctly irreducible forms of epistemic oppression. In this paper, I claim that a major point of distinction between reducible and irreducible epistemic oppression is the major source of difficulty one faces in addressing each kind of oppression, i.e. epistemic power or features of epistemological systems. Distinguishing between reducible and irreducible forms of epistemic oppression can offer a better understanding of what is at stake in deploying the term and when such deployment is apt.

Keywords: Epistemic Oppression; Epistemic Exclusion; Epistemological Resilience; Epistemic Power; Epistemological Systems

Epistemic oppression refers to persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production. Epistemic exclusion, here, will be understood as an unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers.[1] Epistemic agency, in this analysis, refers to the ability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources within a given community of knowers in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources.[2]

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Persuasively sharing epistemic resources can take on any number of forms, from one's ability to utilize those resources for effective and accurate communication; to being able to use a given set of shared resources to make sense of one's experiences; to the ability to rely upon the existence of fair and accurate standards within shared epistemic resources. Taken together, epistemic oppression refers to a persistent and unwarranted infringement on the ability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources that hinder one's contributions to knowledge production. For example, Collins in her book, *Black feminist thought*, draws attention to the "suppression of black feminist thought" and the relatively low impact that body of information has had within academic spheres within USA (2000, 4–8). And though Collins identifies salient epistemic exclusions, very little is said about the nature and scope of epistemic oppression. In fact, since Fricker's (1998) essay, "Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege," the term has not been used frequently, if at all, when discussing specifically epistemic forms of oppression. The tendency to shy away from using the term "epistemic oppression" may follow from an assumption that epistemic forms of oppression are generally reducible to social and political forms of oppression. That is to say, epistemic oppression is a fallout of social and political oppression and there is nothing distinctly *epistemic* about the catalyst for and maintenance of such oppression. In fact, discussions of epistemic forms of oppression generally give the impression, whether true or false, that persistent epistemic exclusion is a by-product of social and political oppression; and there is no unique epistemic landscape of oppression. Whilst I agree that many exclusions that compromise one's ability to contribute to the production of knowledge are the offshoots of social and political forms of oppression, there still exists distinctly irreducible epistemic forms of oppression.

In this paper, I gesture to a form of epistemic oppression that is not solely reducible to social and political factors but rather follows from a feature of epistemological systems themselves, that is epistemological resilience. I do this to show not only the value of the term "epistemic oppression," but to also pull apart epistemic oppression that generally follows from social and political oppression and epistemic oppression that is more closely tied to features of epistemological systems. Ultimately, a major difference between reducible and irreducible epistemic oppression concerns a main source of resistance one can expect to encounter when attempting to address a given epistemic oppression. Reducible epistemic oppression, for example, can most often be addressed utilizing epistemic resources within that same epistemological system. Irreducible epistemic oppression, by contrast, which follows from features of epistemological systems, can only begin to be addressed through recognition of the limits of one's overall epistemological frameworks. This generally means that one's epistemic resources and the epistemological system within which those resources prevail may be wholly inadequate to the task of addressing the persisting epistemic exclusions that are causing epistemic oppression. Though addressing both forms of epistemic oppression is difficult, I will show that irreducible epistemic oppression is difficult due to features of epistemological systems, where as reducible epistemic oppression is difficult due to socially and historically contingent power relations. *I claim that a difference between reducible and irreducible epistemic oppression concerns the character of the resistance to change or, in other words, differing causes of inertia.* In reducible epistemic oppression, inertia is primarily caused by social and historically contingent factors, whereas in irreducible epistemic oppression those factors are just the tip of the iceberg.

Distinguishing between reducible and irreducible forms of epistemic oppression can offer a better understanding of what is at stake in deploying the term and when such deployment is apt. By utilizing an "orders of change" heuristic found in organizational development literature, I introduce three types of epistemic oppression, that is first, second and third-order epistemic exclusions that compromise knowledge production. An "order of change" heuristic or, what I will call, a scope of change perspective tracks kinds of change according to the magnitude of the shift required to motivate those changes. By using a scope of change perspective, one can conceptualize epistemic oppression according to operative epistemic exclusions and their minimal demands for redress so as to identify reducible and irreducible forms of epistemic oppression.

This paper will proceed in two parts. *First*, I briefly outline the scope of change perspective I rely upon in this essay. *Second*, I extend the imagery of Plato's "Allegory of the cave," hereafter referenced as Allegory, in order to highlight three different epistemic oppressions; two of which are reducible epistemic oppressions and a third which illustrates an irreducible epistemic oppression.[3]

1. A Scope of Change Perspective: First, Second- and Third-Order Changes

Jean Bartunek and Michael Moch, in their article, "First-order, second-order, and third-order change and organization development interventions: A cognitive approach," outline three different kinds of changes within organizations according to alterations in organizational schemata. Each level of change is identified according to progressively more radical alterations to prevailing schemata. Schemata, in this context, according to Bartunek and Moch, are "templates that, when pressed against experience, give it form and meaning" (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 484). They operate, as the name suggests, as cognitive blueprints that structure and condense our experience for the sake of ready understanding. For example, Virginia Valian, in her article, "Beyond Gender Schemas," defines a cognitive schema as "a mental construct that … contains a schematic or abbreviated form of someone's concept about an individual or event, or a group of people or events" (Valian 2005, 104). Schemata, whether cognitive or organizational, guide people's cognitive habits insofar as they inform "people as they attend to some aspects of their experience and by, implication, ignore others" (Valian 2005, 104).

Bartunek and Moch, however, are primarily concerned with "organizational schemata," which "generates shared meanings or frames of reference for the organization as a whole or for various subgroups within it" (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 485).

Organizational schemata, as I understand it, are a shared epistemic resource like language that enables goals and pursuits to be shared collectively. What is important about the concept of an organizational schema is the fact that it is, often, intentionally collective and can be altered. As such, they are a kind of shared epistemic resource.[4] Bartunek and Moch, in their work on organizational change, are concerned specifically with the types of changes that prompt significant revisions in organizational schemata. They identify three kinds of changes to organizational schemata or collective epistemic resources. They are as follows:

(1) First-order change: the tacit reinforcement of present understandings.
(2) Second-order change: the conscious modification of present schemata in a particular direction.
(3) Third-order change: the training of organizational members to be aware of their present schemata and thereby more able to change these schemata as they see fit (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 486).

A *first-order change* leaves intact already present operative schemata. Bartunek and Moch identify this kind of change as a problem-solving strategy, where one attempts to solve problems that present obstacles to fulfilling the goals of already present organizational schemata. According to Bartunek and Moch, a first-order change places “focus on solving problems so that established patterns can function more effectively” (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 487). A first-order change is required when there is a noticeable inefficiency given present organizational schemata. The schemata itself is not problematic. However, organizational behaviour with respect to some element of those schemata is inefficient. A first-order change does not call for revisions in beliefs and values specifically. Rather, it attempts to make one’s behaviour reflect one’s beliefs and values and, as such, involves primarily “single-loop processes.” Kate Walsh writes, in her article, “Interpreting the impact of culture on structure,” “when individuals engage in single-loop behaviours, they alter their strategies or approaches to solving a problem, without examining or changing their underlying governing values” (Walsh 2004, 306). In first-order changes, the alterations made need not extend beyond the organizational schemata themselves or the shared epistemic resources in question.

A *second-order change* occurs within organizational schemata more broadly. That is to say, “a second order change seeks to change the schemata themselves … [i.e.] one interpretative schema or set of schemata is “phased out” as another is “phased in,”” (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 486). This is a shift with respect to the mental construct(s) on which one relies. This kind of change is typically a response to discovering that the shared epistemic resources or organizational schemata themselves are insufficient in some way given the goals of the organization. Walsh explains that second-order changes result from single- *and* double-loop processes. A double-loop process occurs when individuals, sets of individuals or groups are “willing to alter their values … [and thereby] create new strategies or ways of thinking, feeling, or acting that actually improve their effectiveness,” (Walsh 2004, 306). Both single- and double-loop processes aim at increasing effectiveness, for

Bartunek, Moch and Walsh. Single-loop behaviours aim at effectiveness via bringing one's actions in line with currently prevailing organizational schemata, whereas double-loop processes aim at changing organizational schemata themselves.[5]

A *third-order change* concerns recognizing and, possibly, enabling the ability to alter operative, instituted social imaginaries, in which organizational schemata are situated. As Loraine Code explains in her article, "Advocacy, Negotiation, and the Politics of Unknowing," "an *instituted* imaginary carries normative social meanings, customs, expectations, assumptions, values, prohibitions, and permissions——the habitus and ethos——into which people are nurtured from childhood" (Code 2008, 34, emphasis in original). In single- and double-loop processes, instituted social imaginaries may not be challenged or even recognized. In order to be able to attend to the "wider social traditions of which … [organizational schema] are a part" triple-loop processes are required (Walsh 2004, 307). Triple-loop processes aid in allowing individuals to recognize "governing values and behaviour" that are, by no means, universally held and to possibly alter them (Walsh 2004, 307). Walsh's triple-loop behaviours are akin to Code's instituting social imaginary. She writes, "an *instituting* imaginary is the locus of social critique and change: it refers to the critical-creative activity of a society … exhibiting its autonomy in exercising its capacity to put itself in question," (Code 2008, 34, emphasis in original). Triple loop processes, or engaging in an instituting social imaginary, create the kind of change that Bartunek and Moch describes as "the opportunity to transcend schemata" (Bartunek and Moch 1994, 24). Third-order changes are prompted in situations when a given organization or group discovers that their organizational schemata are inadequate for some present task. These kind of changes are often required, for example, when dealing with multi-national organizations (Walsh 2004).

A third-order change involves developing the capacity to recognize and alter elements of operative, instituted social imaginaries that inform and preserve organizational schemata. In a third-order change, one's ability to recognize one's "cultural traditions system," which generates and maintain the organizational schemata, can aid in producing an instituting social imaginary capable of altering one's entire epistemological system (Walsh 2004, 307). As such, a third-order change often requires single, double- and triple-loop behaviours. What is particularly important for this paper is the idea that these three kinds of change, that is first, second and third-order changes, are progressively more demanding.

2. First-, Second- and Third-Order Epistemic Exclusion

Using the imagery for Plato's Allegory for an extended exploration of epistemic oppression, in this section, I use the scope of change perspective to illuminate three different kinds of epistemic exclusion.[6] Recall, epistemic exclusion, in this analysis, refers to anything that unwarrantedly hinders one's ability to utilize persuasively collective epistemic resources in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources.[7] Epistemic exclusion compromises epistemic agency due to the fact it compromises one's ability to persuasively share epistemic resources. Using the scope of change approach can aid in detecting the kinds of exclusions that have distinctly epistemic ramifications, for example, hinder knowledge production. In order to understand what is distinctly epistemic about the exclusions I identify, I will begin by drawing attention to three features of our landscape with respect to knowledge.

2.1 Three Relevant Features of Our Epistemological Landscape

The imagery in Plato's Allegory can highlight three salient features of our epistemic landscapes developed by many feminist epistemologists. They concern (1) the situatedness of knowers, (2) the interdependence of our epistemic resources and (3) the resilience of our epistemological systems. All of these features will emerge as conditions that can enable the ability to identify exclusions that persistently infringe upon the epistemic agency of others.

In her article, "Relational knowing and epistemic injustice," Pohlhaus argues that situatedness and interdependence constitute two "epistemically significant" aspects of the sociality of knowers (2011). Pohlhaus writes:

> The knower's *situatedness* refers to the situations in which the knower finds herself repeatedly over time due to the social relations that position her in the world. This situatedness develops particular habits of attention that may attune the knower to others' habits of attention or not, depending upon one's social vulnerability … social position has a bearing on what parts of the world are prominent to the knower and what parts of the world are not. (2011, 3, emphasis in original)

That one's social position can and does aid in shaping the parts of the world to which we attend is hardly a new revelation (see, e.g. Code 1991; Collins 2000; Haraway 1988; Harding 1991; Harstock 1983; Wylie 2003). Haraway in her article, "Situated knowledges," articulates the situatedness of knowers with the metaphor of vision (1988). By appealing to the embodiment of all vision, Haraway emphasizes that one's vision can give the illusion of being "infinite vision" (Haraway 1988, 582). However, as she emphasizes, no one's vision is infinite insofar as it is embodied and directed as a result of this embodiment. To say that knowers are situated is to say that one's capacity for knowing is not infinite, but is rather directed by one's embodiment and, as Pohlhaus highlights, one's social position. Similar to how our embodiment confines and directs our vision at any given time, our social position both confines and directs our habits of attention, which has a profound effect on what we come to know. Hence, knowers are social.

The second feature of our epistemological landscape concerns the interdependent nature of knowing. Knowing itself requires the use of collective and shared epistemic resources. Pohlhaus writes,

> Knowing requires resources of the mind, such as language to formulate propositions, concepts to make sense of experience, procedures to approach the world, and standards to judge particular accounts of experience … we need epistemic resources for making sense of and evaluating our experiences. (Pohlhaus 2011, 4)

Many feminist epistemologists share the observation that the epistemic resources on which we rely to make sense of our worlds are collective and that we all share mutual dependence on those resources (See, especially, Nelson 1990). The difference between one's situatedness and this form of collective interdependence maps onto the difference between *what* one knows and *how* one knows, for Pohlhaus. Where one's situatedness concerns what one is in a position to know, interdependence upon collective hermeneutical resources concerns how one is able to know it (Pohlhaus 2011, 4). The idea that we are all situated, interdependent knowers will aid in highlighting different kinds of harmful epistemic exclusions.

The third feature of our landscape with respect to the social nature of knowledge concerns the resilience of our epistemological systems. Epistemological systems, here, refers to our overall epistemic life ways. It includes operative, instituted social imaginaries, habits of cognition, attitudes towards knowers and/or any relevant sensibilities that encourage or hinder the production of knowledge. An epistemological system is a holistic concept that refers to all the conditions for the possibility of knowledge production and possession. As such, epistemological systems are highly resilient. Resilience concerns "the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before the system redefines its structure" (Gunderson 2000, 426). To say that a given epistemological system is highly resilient is to say that it can absorb extraordinarily large disturbances without redefining its structure. Resilience has, at least, two factors. It refers to the scope of a given domain where a confluence of factors operates in stable ways, and the magnitude of disturbance required to catalyse change or adaptation in that operative context. Both our situated perspectives and collective epistemic resources aid in shaping our epistemological systems. These factors combine to shape stable domains of epistemic habits and instituted social imaginaries that can be difficult to change. Now, this is not to say that all aspects of our epistemological systems are equally resilient or that all knowers have the same threshold for deep epistemological shifts. Rather, every knower's epistemological system has a certain level of resilience that maps onto its stability and the scale required for a disturbance to induce radical alteration.

Medina offers an example of the resilience of our epistemological systems or, what I call, epistemological resilience, when he draws attention to the role instituted social imaginaries play in the production of ignorance in his essay, "The relevance of credibility excess in a proportional view of epistemic injustice," (Medina 2011). Medina outlines a connection between social imaginaries, poor epistemic habits, active ignorance and "meta-blindness." Instituted social imaginaries without "epistemic friction" lead to a number of poor epistemic habits (Medina 2011, 29). Without the propensity to actively search "for more alternatives than those noticed" and to engage those alternatives, one runs a high risk of fostering and maintaining ignorance and "meta-blindness" (Medina 2011, 29). In other words, without routine engagement in instituting social imaginary activities, one runs the risk of maintaining unacceptable levels of ignorance. "Meta-blindness," for Medina, concerns being unable to detect "ones inability to understand certain things," (Medina 2011, 28). This kind of insensitivity to the limits of one's instituted, social imaginaries fosters and maintains poor epistemic habits, for example, epistemic laziness, closed-mindedness and epistemic arrogance (2011, 26). What is important to note about Medina's analysis is how his account of "meta-blindness" and epistemic friction point to the resilience of our epistemological systems. Our instituted social imaginaries, shared epistemic resources and our epistemic habits can maintain a domain of stability that can change, but may never alter significantly without equally significant catalysts for change.[8] Medina encourages seeking epistemic friction so as to counter, on my account, the reality that our epistemological systems are generally resilient, for good or ill.

I say for good or ill here because one cannot simply forego epistemological resilience simply because it can lead to bad epistemic habits and make one prone to profound ignorance. We rely upon epistemological systems to make sense of the world. Our reliance upon them often means that we need such systems to be relatively stable or, after a disturbance, capable of settling into a new state of relative stability. Resilience is just this adaptive capacity. Without such resilience, we would be unable to know anything about our worlds and, worse yet, we would be unable to detect noticeable changes or the need for significant changes within our epistemological systems. Stability, here, is the backdrop against which change can be measured and epistemic resources can be shared. Resilience not only enables that stability, but it institutes a new state of stability after significant disturbances. It is arguably a dynamic, yet, integral feature of our epistemological systems.

From situated perspectives to epistemological resilience, one can see ever-increasing considerations in terms of scope. Yet, where situatedness and interdependence can account for "what" we can know and "how" we can know it given our epistemological systems, resilience constitutes a condition of the possibility of "what" and "how" we know. In what follows, I use the imagery of Plato's Allegory to highlight epistemic exclusions cast according to the situatedness of knowers, interdependence of epistemic resources and the resilience of our epistemological systems. Recall that epistemic oppression, here, is a persistent and unwarranted inability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources that hinders one's contributions to knowledge production. For each kind of epistemic oppression I identify, I highlight an unwarranted and persistent compromise to epistemic agency or a persistent epistemic exclusion and whether the epistemic oppression is reducible or irreducible. What will emerge is an account of three different forms of epistemic oppression and a more clear articulation of the difference between reducible and irreducible epistemic oppression.

2.2 *Within the Shadowlands: Beyond the Allegory of the Cave*

In the Allegory, Socrates describes the circumstances of prisoners living in an "underground, cavelike dwelling" (Cooper 1997, 515a513). They have been "fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them" since childhood (Cooper 1997, 513a515–516). There is a light provided by a fire placed directly behind the prisoners that casts shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners. Between the fire and the prisoners, there is a pathway and a low wall. “Mobile persons” carrying objects over their heads utilize the pathway. Due to the low wall, the prisoners——fettered persons——see the shadows of the objects carried by the mobile persons, not necessarily the shadows of the mobile persons themselves. The people carrying the objects are sometimes speaking, sometimes silent, sometimes noisy. To be clear, according to this description, the prisoners have been kept fettered in a dark cave positioned towards an opposing wall on which varying moving shadows appear and are accompanied by sounds. Of course, the prisoners are not without physical affect, their embodied existence must invoke a number of sensations that can be made to accord with the shadows and sound.

Socrates makes the point of asking whether the situated persons would construct a language based upon the shadows (515a515–516) and entire worldviews resistant to counter-evidence based upon this language. The answer to both of these questions, for Socrates, is yes. The prisoners would create a language that is itself based on shadows, and this language would hold within it “Shadowland” worldviews that would be difficult to disrupt. According to Socrates, their situatedness affords the prisoners a position that will foster a set of epistemic resources that are limited by virtue of their very situatedness; and, in that circumstance, they are “like us” (Cooper 1997, 515a513). I take these opening observations concerning the perspectives of the persons fettered in the cave to enable acknowledgement of the three features of our epistemological landscape highlighted earlier. Insofar as the fettered persons, by virtue of their situatedness, attend to certain features of the cave in ways consistent with their positioning, the imagery of the Allegory allows for acknowledgement of the role that one’s position plays in constraining and facilitating what one can know. Also, the inclusion of an epistemic resource like language that is shared amongst the situated persons acknowledges the degree to which epistemic resources are interdependent. Finally, and most importantly, Socrates’ question about the intractable nature of the worldviews amongst the prisoners allows for acknowledgement that the worldviews and the instituted social imaginaries that create and maintain those worldviews hold a kind of resilience. They will be able to absorb with no or a relatively small change a number of revelations incompatible with Shadowland-inspired epistemological comportment.[9]

2.2.1 First-order epistemic exclusion

Recall that an epistemic exclusion is an unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of a knower, which reduces her/his ability to participate in the production of knowledge. And also, recall that a first-order change attempts to correct for inefficiencies with respect to already present organizational goals. A first-order exclusion combines these two insights. A *first-order epistemic exclusion* follows from a persistent compromise of one’s epistemic agency due to *inefficiency* within shared epistemic resources. That is, a first-order epistemic exclusion is an exclusion that results from the incompetent functioning of some aspect of shared epistemic resources with respect to some goal or value. To demonstrate such inefficiency, I will extend Plato’s Allegory.[10]

Take the image of a line of prisoners that extends from left to right, all facing the back wall of the cave. Now, let's extend the Allegory as follows:

(1) Let us imagine that during the development of interdependent epistemic resources, the fettered persons on the left become a group about which significant, inaccurate negative prejudices evolve. This would entail that fettered persons in the centre and right hold negative prejudices concerning those bound on the left.
(2) Imagine also that as a result of the prejudices there is a significant reduction in the degree of default credibility afforded the prisoners on the left.[11]
(3) Moreover, let us imagine that there is a continuum of default credibility conferred on situated persons. As a result, the prisoners situated in the centre and to the right are deemed routinely more credible than the prisoners situated to their immediate left. We are here presuming that the people on the farthest right enjoy a privileged status of credibility.

The prisoners on the left function with compromised credibility profiles insofar as their default credibility is lowered due to inaccurate, negative prejudices. In the above scenario, the epistemic agency of the persons on the left is breached to the degree that they are routinely deemed less credible when attempting to offer testimony of their knowledge, experience and/or reflections, even when they should be deemed credible. In this extension of the Allegory, we see the creation of an "epistemically disadvantaged identity" (Tuana 2006, 13).

Nancy Tuana, in her article, "The Speculum of Ignorance," writes, "What feminist epistemologists and science studies theorists have carefully demonstrated is that our theories of knowledge and knowledge practices are far from democratic, maintaining criteria of credibility that favor members of privileged groups" (Tuana 2006, 13). Whilst criteria or standards of credibility create privileged groups, they also create relatively underprivileged groups.[12] As Medina explains, conferrals of credibility have a contrastive nature. He writes, "being judged credible to some degree is being regarded as more credible than others, less credible than others, and equally credible as others," (Medina 2011, 18). This assures that there are real stakes to standards or criteria for credibility. With respect to the situated persons in the cave, the fettered persons on the left are routinely deemed less credible than fettered persons on the right.[13]

It is important to note that the lowered default credibility of the prisoners on the left will persist. Cynthia Townley highlights that having an "epistemically disadvantaged social identity" is analogous to being given a version of the curse of Cassandra (Townley 2003). In this Greek myth, Apollo was said to have given Cassandra the gift of prophesy even whilst cursing her with unbelievability. She could offer her prophesies to others, which would be absolutely true, but every word she would utter would sound like a lie to her interlocutor. As a result, she was not believed. Hence, no matter how truthful her words were they would never gain uptake. Fettered persons, whose identities are compromised as a result of lowered credibility assessments, could tell the truth about their experiences using more and more sophisticated language and other shared resources. However, to those who believe their credibility to be compromised, those words will often sound like, at worst, lies and, at best, unreliable statements. It is difficult to impossible to break out of this kind of epistemic exclusion when *one's own capacities to engage in a given epistemic community is compromised to this degree.* The people most profoundly able to dispel the myths around one's credibility deficits[14] are also the victims of the credibility deficits due to how damaging such deficits are to one's functioning within a given epistemic community (Townley 2003, 106). The more widely shared the low credibility assessments are concerning a "disadvantaged epistemic identity" the more difficult they are to address.[15]

As an example of a persisting epistemic exclusion that compromises one's ability to contribute to knowledge production, unwarranted, devaluations of credibility and the creation of epistemically disadvantaged identities are an example of epistemic oppression. What makes this a *first-order epistemic oppression*, however, follows from what is minimally required for address. What is required to address a first-order epistemic exclusion that results from inefficiencies *within* shared epistemic resources is correctives aimed at facilitating greater efficiency or single-loop processes. Recall that single-loop processes are alterations made to address a given problem without changing underlying schemata. Credibility, the value that is inefficiently attenuated, is already present within instituted social imaginaries or prevailing schemata, amongst the prisoners. A new value does not necessarily need to be added, except to the degree it operates on the value in question, that is, credibility. It may not be required to remove credibility assessments per se, but rather, single-loop processes that bring group behaviour in conformity with already accepted values for the sake of efficiency are minimally required. As such, first-order changes and single-loop processes constitute *the minimal changes* necessary to address an epistemic exclusion that results from inefficiencies within shared epistemic resources because the resources themselves are not in question, just the application of the resources.[16]

To see how first-order epistemic oppression is a reducible form, one needs to interrogate the major source of resistance to change for this kind of oppression. Given the fact that the inefficiently attenuated value is already held in common, the value itself is not a major catalyst for resistance. Hence, what is needed is a reform, not a revolution. Still, such a reform is difficult to effect due to the landscape of epistemic power fostered by the inefficiency itself. *Epistemic power* refers to relations of privilege and underprivileged afforded via different social positions, relevant resources and/or epistemological systems with respect to knowledge production. It is often bound up with social, political and economic power. However, it is distinct insofar as epistemic power can come apart from these other forms of power. Medina gives us clues as to why inefficiencies with respect to credibility can cause differentials in epistemic power. By highlighting that credibility conferrals are contrastive, Medina also gestures to the reality that members of a given credibility economy will have a vested interest in how credibility assessments are made. Historically derived disadvantages with respect to credibility often imply historically derived advantages with respect to credibility. It is difficult to pull them apart. Medina explains as follows:

> The credibility excess given to some [e.g. fettered persons on the right] can be correlated to the credibility deficits assigned to others [e.g. fettered persons on the left] not because credibility is a scarce good … but because credibility is a comparative and contrastive quality, and an excessive attribution of it involves the privileged epistemic treatment of some … and the underprivileged epistemic treatment of others. (2011, 20)

This privileged and underprivileged treatment is a form of epistemic power and powerlessness. Whether those given privileged treatment due to inefficient credibility economies experience an injustice in the way Medina suggests (2011, 17–20), many will not abandon their privilege easily. It will be difficult to convince some that their privilege is possibly unwarranted and not their right, which is no small feat depending upon how long the privileged population has been in possession of this kind of epistemic power. What makes addressing first-order epistemic oppression that results from the creation of epistemically disadvantaged identities through unwarranted credibility deficits so difficult is the epistemic power one portion of the population in question may need to surrender. It is difficult to see what would motivate relatively epistemically powerful populations to alter their credibility judgments of relatively epistemically powerless populations and, if necessary, lower their own default credibility.[17]

So though first-order epistemic oppression calls for reform within instituted social imaginaries, the difficulty in addressing first-order epistemic exclusion often follows from relations of epistemic power. In this way, this is a form of reducible epistemic oppression because the difficulty to affect a solution is reducible to historical formations. Who has epistemic power at any given time is a product of given social, political and epistemic formations. Epistemic power does not emerge in a vacuum. It is historically formed and, as it shifts, indicates historical changes. Due to the fact that the most significant change needed to address first-order epistemic oppression are shifts in epistemic power, first-order epistemic oppression is reducible to social, political and historical formations. For example, campaigns aimed at educating the group in question of the inefficient credibility assessments might be effective. Attempts to convince those who are relatively more epistemically powerful to relinquish some of their power might be warranted as a first line of address. One could also pursue another option entirely of attempting to lessen the effect of faulty credibility assessments by redistributing epistemic power according to changes in the environment of inquiry. What is important to note is a major factor one has to grapple with is the social and historical landscape of epistemic power.

2.2.2 Second-order epistemic exclusion: second-order changes

A second-order epistemic exclusion results from *insufficient* shared epistemic resources. To say that shared epistemic resources are insufficient is to point to limitations within those resources themselves. Let us return to the allegorical landscape we are building to demonstrate a second-order epistemic exclusion by adding the following[18]:

(1) Elements of the experiences of the fettered persons on the left are obscured from the other prisoners due to historically being afforded unwarranted, credibility deficits.

(2) The dominant shared language and instituted social imaginaries have been formed largely to reflect the experiences of the far right and other more credible groups.

(3) Let us also say that some experiences, for example, the varying shape of shadows, which are unique to the left, are relatively obscured by how collective epistemic resources have been formed.

Because dominant interdependent epistemic resources, that is, those shared by the majority of fettered persons, have been skewed towards the accounts of people occupying more credible locations (i.e. centre and/or right), the fettered persons on the left are often required to use a language and a set of assumptions when communicating with fettered persons on the centre and right that do not adequately account for the full range of their experiences. An example of a disadvantage that may follow from this type of exclusion concerns having certain shapes of shadows remain unnamed and possibly unrecognized by the entire group, because only members on the left can see them. In this way, they suffer what Miranda Fricker calls, hermeneutical injustice, where "some significant" range of their experience is "obscured from collective understanding" due to gaps within *the interdependent epistemic resources themselves* (Fricker 2007, 155).[19]

Having one's experiences obscured and rendered unintelligible due to hermeneutical injustice is an infringement upon the epistemic agency of the fettered persons on the left. The epistemic exclusion present here does not necessarily denote that the fettered persons on the left have no names, for example, of the shadows they alone can see. Rather, the exclusion follows from being unable to communicate their experience to others within their larger epistemic community who do not share epistemic resources sufficient for tracking those experiences, especially where such experience is immediately relevant for knowledge production. Being unable to communicate large portions of one's experiences due to the deficient nature of dominant, shared epistemic resources, for example profoundly impacts one's ability to contribute to knowledge production insofar as utilizing insufficient epistemic resources disable one's ability to fully render one's experience intelligible to all relevant interlocutors. The utilizing insufficient nature of dominantly shared epistemic resources compromises the epistemic agency of the fettered persons on the left.[20]

If left unaddressed, a second-order epistemic exclusion will persist indefinitely. In cases of second-order epistemic exclusions, the epistemic resources in question function well for a significant portion of the social population, for example, more epistemically powerful portions, and poorly for others. Those whose experiences are obscured by existing epistemic resources are in the position of having to challenge those resources that many believe are reliable and, generally, well functioning. It is important to note that epistemological resilience follows from just this fact and realization. Collective epistemic resources can and do function well enough to produce knowledge about a number of relevant aspects of our lives or they would never have become shared to any large degree. Due to epistemological resilience, which is partially formed by the reliability of dominant epistemic resources, gaps within those resources can continue indefinitely due to a relatively low demand for change. As such, second-order epistemic exclusions form the basis of second-order epistemic oppression.

Second-order epistemic oppression results from the ways interdependent epistemic resources have developed over time. Like with first-order epistemic oppression, the major resistance to change for second-order epistemic oppression follows from epistemic power or epistemic structures of privilege and underprivilege. Maria Lugones comments on the persistence of this kind of epistemic power in her article, "Playfulness, World-Travelling and Loving Perception." She writes of relationships between women of colour feminists and "White/Anglo" feminists:

> I am particularly interested here in those many cases in which White/Anglo women do one or more of the following to women of color: they ignore us, ostracize us, render us invisible, stereotype us, leave us completely alone, interpret us as crazy. All this *while we are in their midst* … Their world and their integrity do not require me at all. (Lugones 1987, 7; emphasis in original)

To say the world and integrity of "White/Anglo" women does not require women of colour, like Lugones, is to gesture to the reality that such women can get along fine without acknowledging their reliance on women of colour or possible insights from women of colour. Though one may be able to argue for the benefits of consulting other opinions, certainly many have and continue to make such arguments; one continually has to entreat people who, by and large, have the epistemic power to simply ignore such arguments. After all, the dominant, shared epistemic resources work just fine for many. Convincing people that they are missing something integral when, in fact, they cannot detect such deficiencies is no easy task.

Given that second-order epistemic exclusion follows from insufficient shared epistemic resources, it minimally requires second-order changes and double-loop processes that call into question the operative epistemic resources themselves. Recall that a double-loop process occurs when individuals or groups are willing to change their ways of thinking and their values to improve effectiveness. Significant shifts in collective epistemic resources required to address infringements on epistemic agency that result from the insufficient epistemic resources entail the willingness to change one's views and general ways of thinking. In other words, it requires one to be willing to change one's instituted social imaginaries and/or prevailing schemata. A "conceptual revolution" is required (Langton 2010, 460, 463). Second-order changes most likely involve first-order changes as well, where it becomes necessary for fettered persons with relatively stronger default credibility to listen seriously to fettered persons with relatively weaker default credibility, which will be a challenge for reasons gestured to in the previous section. Yet, addressing a second-order epistemic exclusion could not be addressed with merely first-order changes. It would also require second-order changes, where one comes to recognize that the very epistemic resources on which one relies are in need of significant revision and executes those revisions.

A second-order epistemic oppression follows from the reality that whilst interdependent epistemic resources illuminate some aspects of our worlds, they simultaneously work to obscure other aspects. Those populations who generally suffer the brunt of the dual-sided nature of interdependent epistemic resources are hardly ever accidentally chosen populations. The construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities and a range of ignorance-producing social/political exclusions often determine who will most likely experience second-order epistemic oppression. Historical, social and political formations of marginalization largely account for who finds herself/himself suffering from second-order epistemic oppression. As such, like first-order epistemic oppression, the major source of inertia involves the impetus to change in those with relatively more epistemic power. The creation of alternative epistemologies is an important step for a relatively epistemically powerless population, but does not necessarily lessen the impact of second-order epistemic oppression when one is still required to utilize insufficient, dominant, shared epistemic resources. Hence, relative epistemic power, that is, privilege with respect to insufficient resources via finding those resources well fitted to one's own experiences and understandings of the world, must be grappled with as a major source of inertia in addressing second-order epistemic oppression. And, as with first-order epistemic oppression, historical, social and political factors determine who will possess that epistemic power and who will be relatively powerless. Second-order epistemic oppression, like the first, is a reducible epistemic oppression given that the major resistance to change is reducible to the social and historical development of epistemic power.

2.2.3 Third-order epistemic exclusion: third-order changes

The third kind of epistemic exclusion, a third-order exclusion is a compromise to epistemic agency caused by *inadequate* dominant, shared epistemic resources. To say that such resources are inadequate is to throw into question the relevance of a given community's overall dominant resources in light of the knowledge production activities in question. This kind of epistemic exclusion is different than first- or second-order exclusion, insofar as the latter is detected from *within* the shared epistemic resources themselves. Third-order epistemic exclusion proceeds from the "outside" of a set of epistemic resources to throw large portions of one's epistemological system into question as a result of the goals of a given inquiry. To explain this form of epistemic exclusion, I will add more layers to the Allegory.[21] Imagine the following:

(1) The fettered persons have always needed to be fed and watered by mobile persons. As a result, there have always been mobile persons that the fettered persons have experienced as more than obscured carriers of objects. Not being able to turn from the right to the left, they may have experienced the mobile persons simply as the voices they hear in their ears that announce the time to eat or the experience of eating itself.
(2) The same set of people always feed the fettered persons from the right. They are also not allowed to be viewed by or engage the fettered persons at all. They can, however, engage other mobile persons and sometimes do while feeding the fettered prisoners.
(3) Now, as a result of being fed on the right, the fettered person on the farthest left would have a unique experience. She would be the only fettered person who has never had a voice sound on her immediate left.

Here, we see that the bound persons have always had some indication that there exists a fuller world than Shadowland epistemic resources may allow. For the sake of this example, let us presume they have not discovered that they are fettered in place and there are greater options for mobility. In this case, the far left-fettered person has the ability to detect something about the larger social world none of the other members can detect in quite the same way. Let us say, that given collective epistemic resources, she knows that her experience is unique and that it indicates a larger cave than is immediately apparent. Due to the kind of revisions her insight would require of collective epistemic resources, her unique experience and its possible resulting revelations are absorbed into the epistemological system with little change when introduced. Her testimony of the experience may be rejected as nonsensical; they may designate her as a deceiver with dangerous ideas; or the conclusions she draws might even invoke ridicule and laughter. No matter how her observations are absorbed, they fail to effect the appropriate changes in collective epistemic resources. The fettered person on the farthest left's testimony simply does not afford a momentous enough occasion to catalyse the appropriate alterations within shared epistemic resources, partly because such changes would have profound impact on the persisting, epistemological system. In other words, she is confronted with the epistemological resilience of a maladjusted system. The fettered person on the farthest left's epistemic agency is compromised by being rendered incapable of contributing to the domains of inquiry relevant to her insight.

The farthest left-fettered person faces a different dilemma than those presented by gaps within interdependent epistemic resources. Those gaps can affect everyone though not necessarily equally.[22] However, the fettered person on the farthest left knows very well how to articulate her position and, yet, her account fails to gain the appropriate uptake given the ways her testimony challenges shared epistemic resources. As such, she faces problems with respect to epistemological resilience of inadequate shared epistemic resources and not necessarily inefficient and/or insufficient shared epistemic resources. Now, this explanation alone is not sufficient for understanding the nature of the exclusion presented by inadequate shared epistemic resources. One must look to the epistemological systems preserving these shared epistemic resources even in the face of their inadequate nature for such an explanation. The reason one must look to epistemological systems to understand the exclusion that follows from inadequate shared epistemic resources is because those resources, themselves, do not shed light on why they are incapable of accounting for the farthest left-fettered person's insight. If they could reveal such information from within those epistemic resources, then a third-order epistemic exclusion would not emerge. However, given, in our Allegory, such an exclusion has emerged, the problem scales farther than the epistemic resources themselves to the system *upholding* and *preserving* those resources. If the operative epistemological system was versatile enough to track the insight of the farthest left prisoner, for example, held a value in radical changes to instituted social imaginaries, then her insight would have, at least, prompted an evaluation of currently held beliefs and assumptions and, at most, had the appropriate impact on shared epistemic resources. As it stands, her testimony alone is unable to generate such a change. This scenario is not particularly far fetched. It is the stuff "culture clashes" are made of.[23] The fettered person on the farthest left is essentially attempting to testify to something that may seem impossible given the state of the operative epistemological system, that is, current shared epistemic resources and instituted social imaginaries, for example. Hence, to begin to address a third-order exclusion of this kind and the resulting epistemic oppression faced by the farthest left-fettered person, the parameters of one's epistemological system must be recognized and, quite possibly, radically altered. What is required, then, are third-order changes.

Addressing this kind of epistemic exclusion extends beyond making one's behaviour reflect one's values (single-loop process and first-order epistemic exclusion) or even identifying gaps within operative epistemic resources and revising for them (double-loop processes and second-order epistemic exclusion). It would also require third-order changes and third-loop processes where fettered persons gain the ability to be aware of their larger epistemological systems, that is, what orients one's instituted social imaginaries, so as to possibly change them or shift out of them entirely. Recall that triple-loop processes refer to recognizing one's instituted social imaginaries and altering them. The epistemic exclusion faced by the farthest left-fettered person is a third-order exclusion insofar as third-order changes are minimally required to address it. It is imperative that those perpetrating third-order epistemic oppression take a step back and become aware of their overall epistemological systems that are preserving and legitimating inadequate epistemic resources. This kind of recognition, which can be seen as akin to a broad recognition of one's "cultural traditions systems," is extraordinarily difficult (Walsh 2004).

It is the difficulty of third-order changes that indicates that third-order exclusions will persist overtime. The magnitude of the change required to recognize the limits of one's epistemological systems can be immense. The testimony of the farthest left-fettered person does not and cannot provide such a catalyst for many. It is not absolutely clear what does provoke such changes. Bartuneck and Moch, when writing about third-order changes, compare the experience of encountering the limits of one's epistemological system as an experience with "the mystical" (1994). It is like experiencing the impossible as possible and, correspondingly, viewing the limits of one's epistemological systems that designate the possible as impossible. Being able to make this step is difficult enough. Being able to change those limitations may be impossible for many. That is to say, the primary difficulty in addressing third-order epistemic oppression is the *work required to ever acknowledge its existence*, which is made difficult due to epistemological resilience itself. I will return to this point. The exclusions experienced by the fettered person on the farthest left will persist over time. As such, she experiences third-order epistemic oppression.

In attempting to address third-order epistemic oppression, one must grapple seriously with epistemological resilience itself. Recall that resilience has two factors. It concerns the scope of the domain for stability and the magnitude of disturbance required to motivate significant change. In third-order changes, one is called upon to become aware of aspects of the domain of stability of one's epistemological system, whilst all the while relying upon one's epistemological system for the inquiry. This presents significant difficulties and not necessarily new ones. From Meno's paradox to Martin Heidegger's question of Being, meta-inquiries have had to acknowledge the irreducible nature of some subject matter due largely to one's reliance upon those matters when interrogating them, that is, where what one seeks to interrogate is the condition for the possibility of the interrogation itself. However, this irreducibility poses difficulties insofar as the very faculty or domain of inquiry in question is the very faculty or domain of inquiry one cannot escape. So though the prompt for inquiry comes from the "outside," the inquiry always remains "inside" in challenging ways. The interrogations into a resilient epistemological system, by relying upon that epistemological system will make epistemological resilience a problem. That is to say, the very resilience of the system may thwart one's ability to make significant headway in becoming aware of the limitations of one's epistemological system by only revealing what the system is prone to reveal, thereby reinforcing the idea that one's system is adequate to the task, when one is actually stuck in a vicious loop. It is for this reason third-order changes require single-and double-loop processes not only third-loop processes. Fettered persons to the right of the farthest left prisoner will need to extend extraordinary amounts of credibility to the farthest left prisoner. They must also be open to radical conceptual revolutions in the face of, quite possibly, profoundly insufficient shared epistemic resources. But they must also, and this is the hardest part, grapple with the resilience of their epistemological systems to grasp what portions of their overall epistemic life ways are thwarting robust uptake of the testimony of the fettered person on the farthest left. As a result, what makes third-order epistemic oppression an irreducible epistemic oppression is not the absence of epistemic power. Epistemic power will absolutely exist as a problem for third-order changes. The major inertia, however, would be in prompting recognition of a third-order epistemic oppression at all. The irreducibility of inquiries into one's epistemological system coupled with features of such systems, like epistemological resilience, often become roadblocks to ever acknowledging the existence of third-order epistemic oppression. Because the major form of difficulty in addressing third-order epistemic oppression follows from the irreducibility of the inquiry and epistemological resilience, which is a feature of epistemological systems themselves, on my account, third-order epistemic oppression is an irreducible epistemic oppression.

3. Conclusion

There are, at least, two major objections to taking the third-order epistemic oppression I highlight as being an irreducible form of epistemic oppression. First, one could say that the third-order epistemic oppression is actually reducible to social and political power. I can concede this point without having to change the insight I am offering here. It is quite possible that all three forms of epistemic oppression can be addressed with the possession of immense social and political power, though the irreducible form will still pose significant problems. However, what makes addressing each oppression difficult varies between irreducible and reducible forms of epistemic oppression. Even if I have the ability to change routine credibility assessment of groups deemed less credible, for example, I would have to grapple with the epistemic power of those with relative privilege. In turn, if I wanted to alter epistemological systems, my largest challenge would be to grapple with problems of epistemological resilience and like features of such systems.

The second objection may claim that *all* of the forms of epistemic oppression outlined here are made difficult due to epistemological resilience. This objection moves the point of identifying all forms of inertia to the level of epistemological systems. This objection would proceed as follows: why not simply say that the major inertia for all of the three forms of epistemic oppression is caused by epistemological resilience? On this interpretation, the resistance to change for a first and second-order epistemic oppression will be the epistemic power upheld and preserved by a resilient, epistemological system; where epistemic power is a feature of epistemological resilience. This interpretation has one major benefit, as the objection goes, it builds in an acknowledgement that epistemological systems are historical and social developments, which is undoubtedly true.

I am not sure this is an objection as much as a shifting of terms. I can happily concede this objection and claim that inertia for every form of epistemic oppression is some form of epistemological resilience as long as the distinction I have introduced here remains. Epistemic power, though present in third-order epistemic oppression, is just the beginning of the difficulties that follow from attempting to address third-order epistemic oppression. This observation is important. It begins to offer clues as to the range of solutions that will be necessary to address each form of epistemic oppression. It can also help us construct standards for normative theories of knowledge according to their ability to adjudicate or facilitate the recognition of features of epistemological systems and their function.

I have tried to show the importance of a concept like epistemic oppression by conceptualizing three forms of it. First-order epistemic oppression results from inefficient shared epistemic resources, like organizational schemata or instituted social imaginaries, which foster epistemic exclusions. Second-order epistemic oppression results from insufficient shared epistemic resources that produce salient epistemic exclusions. And third-order epistemic oppression follows from inadequate shared epistemic resources that foster epistemic exclusions. I have tried to show that first- and second-order epistemic oppression are reducible to historical formations, insofar as a major source of inertia in addressing them will be social, political, and historical landscapes of epistemic power. For third-order epistemic oppression, however, a major resistance to change will be features of epistemological systems themselves. What the distinction between reducible and irreducible oppression offers is a heuristic for understanding a range of different kinds of problems in knowledge production.

Notes

[1] This definition of epistemic exclusion relies heavily on Irene Omolola's use of the term (see Adadevoh 2011).

[2] My definition of epistemic agency is heavily influenced by Cynthia Townley's definition (see Townley 2003, 109–110).

[3] I use Plato's Allegory very deliberately here. The allegorical imagery of Plato's Allegory facilitates an acknowledgement of the three features of our epistemic landscape, that is, situatedness, interdependence and resilience, which I will use to illustrate different epistemic exclusions. It also serves the goals of this paper. *I am not concerned here with establishing new forms of epistemic oppression or that epistemic oppression exists.* If I held these goals, then utilizing the imagery in Plato's Allegory would be inappropriate. Rather, my objective is to highlight the possibility of pulling apart reducible and irreducible epistemic oppression. As such, I do not use "real life" examples mainly because my focus is not to demonstrate the actual existence of epistemic oppression itself. Rather, mine is a pursuit of an adequate conceptualization of epistemic oppression. For articles that highlight the existence of epistemic oppression (see Code 1995; Collins 1989; Fricker 1998, 2007; Harding 1986; Langton 2000; Mills 1999). Hence, this analysis is an inquiry into *conceptual approaches that can illuminate the existence of epistemic oppression* and not an attempt to locate epistemic oppression on the ground.

[4] This is not to say all organizational schemata are intentionally decided upon. To say that organizational schemata are intentionally collective is to gesture to the fact that collectives can and do come together according to shared aims, values and/or beliefs for the sake of furthering those aims, values, and/or beliefs. Organizational schemata will, then, develop both inside and outside of these goals thereby creating increasingly complex social-collective schemata.

[5] There may be some pause over the focus on effectiveness in this approach to organizational change. However, epistemic affairs, as I understand them, are a normative affairs. Knowing well (internal justification) and accurately (external justification) is often the goal of epistemological investigations. I take this to be a kind of effectiveness.

[6] It is important to note, again, that I am not borrowing the insight Plato draws from his Allegory. Rather I am appropriating the imagery for the sake of my attempt to conceptualize epistemic oppression. Hence, my use of the Allegory may diverge starkly from Plato's positions.

[7] Epistemic exclusion is not synonymous with epistemic oppression. Recall, I defined epistemic oppression according to persisting exclusion. Hence, establishing the existence of an epistemic exclusion is only one aspect of establishing the presence of epistemic oppression. One must also demonstrate the persistence of the exclusion.

[8] Some would argue that even this kind of search would most likely prove ineffective. For example, Mariana Ortega carefully details how the search for the kinds of experiences that lead to epistemic friction can often lead to "being knowingly, lovingly ignorant," another recalcitrant form of ignorance (Ortega 2006).

[9] To be clear, though Plato would go on to postulate an "outside" of the cave, where access to things-in-themselves resides. I am in no way committed to the idea that there is an outside of the allegorical cave setting Plato creates. In fact, it may well be the case that, as many suggest, there is no outside of our social worlds, where knowledge lies. Regardless of how one resolves the question of knowledge and perspective, there is, however, an outside to one's own perspective that is often held by other knowers. Hence, the "outside," in the allegory I am building, points to epistemically different perspectives, that is, mobile vs. fettered persons.

[10] This extension of the Allegory is heavily influenced by Nancy Tuana's articulation of the creation of "epistemically damaged identities," Patricia Hill Collins' analysis of the suppression of black feminist thought and Miranda Fricker's paradigm case of testimonial injustice (see Collins 1989; Fricker 2007; Tuana 2006).

[11] I use the phrase "default credibility level" because it does not denote an automatic credibility conferral, but rather a general propensity to give positive credibility assessments.

[12] For an account that develops this well, see Medina 2011. Tuana cites the lower credibility given to victims of incest as an example of the "construction of an epistemically disadvantaged identity." She explains: "Victims of incest are often judged as not being epistemically credible because they are constructed as being suggestible, gullible, or vengeful. Their testimony is discredited; their memories are questioned. In instances such as these, it is not simply facts, events, practices, or technologies that are rendered not known, but individuals and groups who are rendered 'not knowers.' They are constructed as untrustworthy." (2006, 13). In cases where entire groups suffer prejudices that compromise their ability to appear credible, for example, these groups experience epistemic exclusion insofar as their ability to participate in knowledge production is compromised. Their language skills become moot. Their ability to access shared images and metaphors for communicating their experience is lessened considerably. In other words, populations with epistemically disadvantaged identities have a reduced ability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources.

[13] Miranda Fricker, in her book, *Epistemic Injustice,* calls the routine deflation of a given groups credibility, testimonial injustice. She writes, testimonial injustice "occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker 2007, 1). Fricker's epistemic injustice is a species of epistemic oppression. Insofar as testimonial injustice involves persistent epistemic exclusion that compromises epistemic agency, it is a kind of epistemic oppression. Hence, the concept of epistemic oppression is an umbrella term for multiple ideas of how knowledge production can routinely harm some people and/or populations. Elsewhere I have explored Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice using my understanding of epistemic oppression. (see Dotson 2012).

[14] I borrow this term from Fricker (2007, 17).

[15] There are many examples of this kind of epistemic exclusion (see e.g. Code 1995; Collins 2000; Fricker 2007; Williams 1991). For an extended example, see the Rigoberta Menchú controversy (Arias 2001).

[16] It is important to note that "minimal" here does not denote "easy" or "adequate." It is most likely the case, as is the case with Fricker's testimonial injustice, the changes required to address first-order exclusions are quite extensive (For an account illustrating this, see Langton 2010). However, it is unclear that one needs to abandon the value placed on credibility in order to address the creation of epistemically disadvantaged identities via credibility deficits. I imply this conclusion in my article, "A Cautionary Tale" (2012).

[17] For an extended example of the difficulty of the backlash such endeavors invoke see the Rigoberta Menchú controversy (Arias 2001).

[18] The additions made to the Allegory are heavily influenced by Fricker's paradigm case of hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007).

[19] Fricker's example of hermeneutical injustice concerned the events leading to the creation of the term "sexual harassment," where experiences with sexual harassment predated the term itself to the detriment of the victims. Many deny the prevalence of this kind of exclusion. They claim that it presumes that at any given time there is but one set of epistemic resources (Mason 2011). However, even if one were to take the reality of alternative epistemologies and epistemic resources into consideration, communicating with those not fluent in those alternative epistemic resources can still foster second-order epistemic exclusion.

[20] See, for example (Anzaldúa 1999; Dotson 2011; duCille 2009; Lugones and Spelman 1983).

[21] These extensions are influenced by Lorraine Code's concept of rhetorical space and my concept of contributory injustice (see Code 1995; Dotson 2012).

[22] There is a budding debate concerning whether Fricker's hermeneutical injustice, which I have identified as an example of a second order epistemic injustice, affects all involved knowers equally (see Beeby 2011; Medina 2012).

[23] For a good example of similar epistemic ramifications of such clashes (see Bergin 2001).

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